



State of New Jersey  
Department of Environmental Protection and Energy  
Natural and Historic Resources

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Scott A. Weiner  
Commissioner

James F. Hall  
Assistant Commissioner

March 24, 1992  
ONJH-C92-143

Mr. Alvin L. Zach, P.E. Director  
Department of Engineering  
City of Newark  
920 Broad Street  
Newark, New Jersey 07102

RE: Essex County  
City of Newark  
Cornerstone Baptist Church - Demolition

Dear Mr. Zach:

I am writing in response to your letter of March 3, 1992 to Commissioner Scott Weiner concerning the Cornerstone Baptist Church.

I cannot authorize your request for emergency demolition of the Cornerstone Baptist Church at this time. Instead, I ask, first, that the City ensure that the church is secure. Judging from the photographs in the submitted report, it does not appear that the building has been completely fenced off. The City should install a fence to protect pedestrians along the front facade of the church, if it has not already done so. And second, I ask that the City submit an application for review pursuant to the New Jersey Register of Historic Places Act for the upcoming April 16, 1992 meeting of the New Jersey Historic Sites Council.

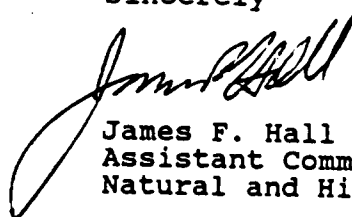
Upon evaluation of the material submitted with your request for emergency demolition, it is clear that the situation described as an emergency has been pending since 1990. The transmittal letter on the report evaluating the Church from THOR Engineers, P.A. is dated January 15, 1992, and could therefore easily have been submitted in time for the February 20, 1992 meeting of the New Jersey Historic Sites Council. Moreover, the engineer's report indicates that "the entire roof, a portion of the second floor, and the surrounding balcony were destroyed by fire in 1990." The City's failure to make a submission for review in the time since the fire at the Church argues against the emergency nature of the request.

Because demolition would mean the complete loss of this New Jersey Register Listed Property, I am unwilling to authorize its demolition without a full review by the New Jersey Historic Sites Council, unless you have new information that warrants current emergency action. I therefore ask that the City of Newark submit the following information to the Council's staff, the Office of New Jersey Heritage as soon as possible in order to present it at the April 16, 1992 meeting of the Council:

1. An assessment of the feasibility of rehabilitation of the Church. The assessment should be made by an architect/engineer with demonstrated experience in the rehabilitation of historic buildings. The Cornerstone Baptist Church has been devastated by fire, however, its exterior shell (much of the significance of the Church is architectural) is largely intact. Please note that buildings in similarly deteriorated condition have been successfully rehabilitated. For example, the Clarendon Baptist Church in Boston, which was gutted by fire, has been rehabilitated into apartments.
2. An estimate of the cost of stabilization of the Church. The estimate should include a comparison of the cost of stabilization and the cost of demolition.
3. A statement from the Cornerstone Baptist Church congregation as to their interests in renewed use of the building if it were rehabilitated, and a copy of any resolutions or comments concerning the proposed demolition made by the Newark Landmarks Preservation Commission.

If you have any further questions, please contact C. Terry Pfoutz of my staff at (609) 984-0140.

Sincerely



James F. Hall  
Assistant Commissioner for  
Natural and Historic Resources

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